

## 2015 General Assembly Adopted Changes to the Virginia Preschool Initiative- March 10, 2015

Virginia's state-funded preschool program for at-risk four year-olds has steadily grown in popularity with parents and school division administrators enrolling over 18,000 students this past fall. Yet this GA Session that popularity was not enough to counteract some significant policy changes for the program. A number of budget amendments were introduced to shape VPI policy (VPI is only in the budget, not the code). Notably a budget amendment was adopted to form a VPI Reform Committee of members of House Appropriations and Senate Finance. This Reform Committee will likely weigh the policy changes adopted this year and others before the next General Assembly Session.

1. **Uniform eligibility-** Instead of the introduced budget amendment recommending a uniform income eligibility criteria for VPI of 130% poverty (eligibility for free lunch), the adopted budget includes the following eligibility guidelines: 1) family income below 200% poverty 2) homelessness 3) parent/guardian did not graduate HS 4) a student with special needs/disabilities below 350% poverty. The Dept of Education will also be asked to collect aggregate data on the number of students enrolled below 130% poverty and above 130% and below 200% poverty. This change will impact the upcoming enrollment and recruitment processes for VPI next fall.
2. **Allocated slots updated for kindergarten enrollment-** An amendment was adopted to update VPI slot allocation based on new kindergarten enrollment projections and reduce overall VPI funding by \$2.9 million. Because there is language in the introduced budget that the 2014 hold harmless allocation will continue for FY16, some communities will not be impacted by these changes this year but could be if they continue in the future (notably Norfolk, Newport News, Portsmouth and Lynchburg). However there are a few communities will be impacted by the allocation changes this coming fall (notably Roanoke City, Tazewell, Southampton, Greenville & Campbell would lose allocated and used slots of a classroom or more).
3. **VPI+ federal grant-** The adopted budget includes language allocating the federal preschool expansion grants and language that state general funds will not be used to cover any reductions in received or budgeted federal grant funds.
4. **Formation of Jt. Subcommittee on VPI Reform-** Chairmen of House Appropriations and Senate Finance shall appoint up to 5 members from their committees to provide recommendations for reforming VPI by Nov. 1, 2015. The staff of the education subcommittees and the Dept of Education will help facilitate the scope of work. VA Early Childhood Foundation will provide support and resources to members and staff. Stakeholders such as VDSS, VCCS, local school division, private providers, accredited organization, education associations and businesses may provide additional information if requested.

More detail on proposed legislative changes to VPI available at: <http://vakids.org/topics/roller-coaster-ride-vpi-budget-amendments>

For more information contact Emily Griffey at [Emily@vakids.org](mailto:Emily@vakids.org)